Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships

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Through the combined contribution of these individuals, we offer the *Collaboration Toolkit* to the field. As the authors of this product, we are grateful for their involvement in creating this toolkit.

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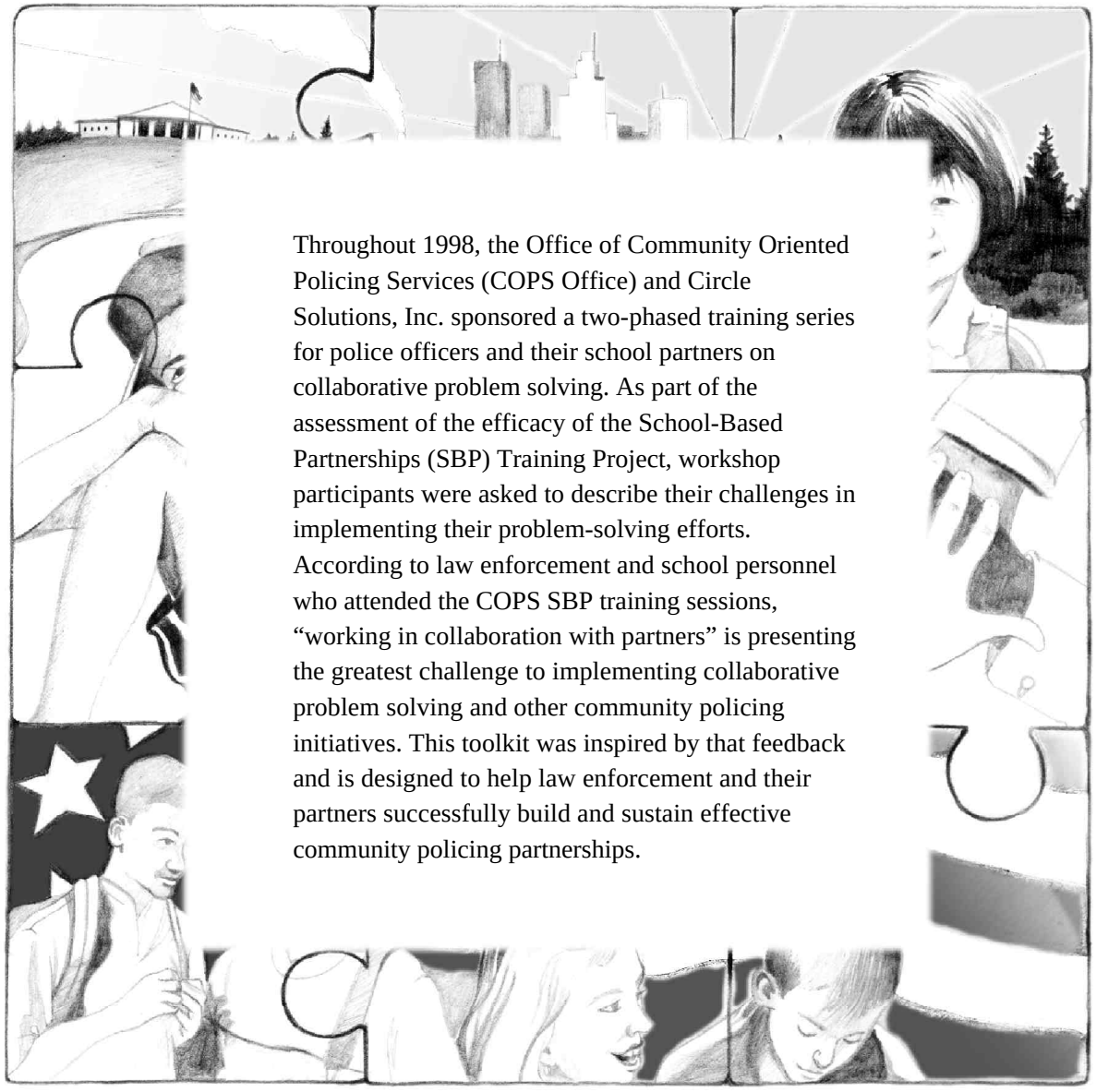

Throughout 1998, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and Circle Solutions, Inc. sponsored a two-phased training series for police officers and their school partners on collaborative problem solving. As part of the assessment of the efficacy of the School-Based Partnerships (SBP) Training Project, workshop participants were asked to describe their challenges in implementing their problem-solving efforts. According to law enforcement and school personnel who attended the COPS SBP training sessions, "working in collaboration with partners" is presenting the greatest challenge to implementing collaborative problem solving and other community policing initiatives. This toolkit was inspired by that feedback and is designed to help law enforcement and their partners successfully build and sustain effective community policing partnerships.

Introduction

If the strongest horse in the team would go ahead, he cannot, if all the rest hold back.
—Abraham Lincoln

Law enforcement alone cannot implement and advance community policing. Law enforcement benefits when community partnerships are formed to implement community policing—these partnerships increase the amount of information available to law enforcement, reduce duplication of efforts, improve the comprehensiveness of approaches to community and school-based problems, and create public recognition of community policing efforts.

The *Collaboration Toolkit* is designed as a guide for law enforcement agencies and their partners as they develop, fix, and sustain productive law enforcement/community partnerships supporting the advancement of community policing. The toolkit can assist law enforcement personnel working with citizen groups, community-based organizations, school personnel, youth, government officials, and others to implement and advance community policing in schools and communities. The toolkit's broad scope will facilitate use by COPS Office grantees and other law enforcement agencies and their partners as well as allow the concepts to be tailored to specific local partnership issues. The toolkit will not define all aspects of community policing nor serve as a how-to guide for problem solving; rather, this toolkit should be used to enhance collaborative efforts to implement community policing and work on problem-solving initiatives.

Collaboration is not always easy to achieve. Although the components and concepts of a successful collaboration may appear basic, implementing these concepts is often very challenging—as COPS Office grantees have noted during training and technical assistance workshops. This toolkit identifies nine components of a successful collaboration: 1.) stakeholders with a vested interested in the issue, 2.) trust among and between the partners, 3.) a shared vision and common goals, 4.) expertise among partners to solve community problems, 5.) teamwork strategies, 6.) open communication, 7.) motivated partners, 8.) sufficient means to implement and sustain the collaborative effort, and 9.) an action plan. As the collaboration develops and matures, partners should continually revisit each component to assess the status of the collaboration and determine what actions are needed to enhance the collaboration.

Not all law enforcement relationships must be collaborative, nor should they all strive to be so. Relationships operate along a continuum, and the appropriate working relationship may vary depending on the issue at hand. However, when law enforcement agencies implement a problem-solving project, organize neighborhood watch programs, develop school resource officer programs, or initiate other similar community policing initiatives, collaboration is critical.

As the most comprehensive and intensive type of working relationship, collaboration requires commitment from a number of individuals and agencies to work together as a team and contribute resources to reach a common, long-term goal. This toolkit will help those who are committed to developing, improving, and/or sustaining successful collaborations to advance community policing.

Using This Guide

Reading the entire toolkit will be helpful to those working in the formative stages of collaboration building. Mature collaborations can refer to one or several topic areas to address specific challenges, assess the efficacy of various aspects of the partnership, and/or implement some new ideas.

All users will benefit from reading Collaboration Fundamentals and using the diagnostic worksheet found in Diagnosing the Collaboration. Section 1, Tool: Unsticking Stuck Groups/Reassessing the Collaboration, may help determine which collaboration component to read about first.

For each of the nine essential collaboration components, this toolkit describes:

The Vision: What would the component look like in the best of all worlds?

Action Steps to Success: What do the partners need to do to build, fix, and sustain the component?

Avoiding the Pitfalls: What barriers can partners expect to encounter? What are the warning signs of these barriers? What are some suggestions for addressing challenges when they occur?

Tools to Plan and Chart Your Progress: Worksheets and exercises to help collaborative partners achieve the vision.

You may progress through the toolkit sequentially, or you may select a particular component about which you need more information or assistance and concentrate on that discussion first. Several components include Learn More About It sections with sources for additional information.

"This will be a very important addition to any partnership or collaboration. You have created a toolkit that will help many community partnerships."

—Eric Lofchie
Windsor Youth and Family Services
Town of Windsor Police Department, CA

"I feel first-timers as well as novice collaborators could benefit from this toolkit."

—Deputy Janae Sanders
Community Policing/Public Liaison Officer
Yamhill County Sheriff's Office, OR

"It looks like you put together a great guide on how to succeed with a collaboration, and how not to fall victim to the pitfalls that normally accompany these types of partnerships."

—Lieutenant Robert Lisa
Training, Planning, and Operations
City of Hoboken Police Department, NJ